



STATE OF DELAWARE
OFFICE OF HIGHWAY SAFETY
P.O. BOX 1321
DOVER, DELAWARE 19903-1321
302-744-2743
www.ohs.delaware.gov

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 30, 2008

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Andrea Summers
Community Relations Officer
302-744-2743

Delaware Pedestrian Deaths Up Slightly in 2008 – OHS Conducting Walk Smart Campaign as Peak Month for Crashes Nears

Dover - Pedestrian deaths in Delaware are up by 30% compared to the same time frame last year according to state fatal crash statistics. Since January 1st, 10 people have died in pedestrian crashes, compared to 7 who had been killed by this time in 2007. Office of Highway Safety (OHS) officials are hopeful that the implementation of their Walk Smart Campaign will prevent further tragedies.

“We take the loss of each life on our roadways very seriously,” said Tricia Roberts, OHS Director. “When it comes to pedestrians, the potential for even a low speed crash to become a fatal crash is so great that we believe it’s extremely important to take action when we see any indication of an increase in these types of deaths.”

More concerning is the fact that pedestrian crashes tend to spike during the month of August. That’s why OHS is now rolling out its Walk Smart campaign. As is the case with other highway safety initiatives, the Walk Smart campaign will include a combination of enforcement and public awareness. However, OHS officials say the public awareness component is what will truly drive the success of this effort.

“The ability to prevent further loss of life rests directly with both drivers and pedestrians,” said Andrea Summers, Community Relations Officer for OHS. “Much of it involves using common sense, but we hope that the methods we’re using to deliver the Walk Smart message will reinforce and remind people about basic safe pedestrian practices.”

Billboards asking motorists to “Give Pedestrians a Brake” are being placed in New Castle and Sussex Counties along high crash corridors such as Routes 40, 13 and 113. Signage can be

seen on city and county DART busses ask pedestrians to make sure they are visible to motorists. In addition, OHS will be distributing posters with safe walking tips to businesses and reflective blinking lights to those who walk and jog in low light conditions to the public.

The following police agencies who have identified high pedestrian crash areas within their jurisdiction will be conducting additional enforcement of pedestrian traffic safety laws: Delaware State Police, Dover Police, Millsboro Police, Newark Police and Seaford Police. Enforcement will continue through September and both pedestrians and motorists may be cited for violating state laws. Most violations involve a base fine of \$25.00 but additional court costs can result in a total fine of nearly \$70.00. Officers will also be provided with blinking lights and brochures to distribute to the public.

Though motorists bear responsibility to keep an eye out for those who are walking, pedestrians are often at fault when crashes occur because they fail to use crosswalks, fail to wear reflective clothing at night in order to be seen or they walk into the roadway. When vehicle drivers are at fault they are often speeding too fast to stop or fail to yield the right of way for a pedestrian legally using a crosswalk.

By following these basic safety tips, everyone can learn to Walk Smart.

- Always cross at marked intersections or crosswalks when possible.
- If no sidewalk is available, walk facing traffic and walk as far from the edge of the roadway as possible.
- Wear reflective clothing or carry a flashlight when walking at night or in low light conditions – it's the law.
- Avoid walking along or attempting to cross a roadway if you have alcohol and/or other drugs in your system. Impaired walking, like impaired driving, can be deadly and is illegal.
- If your vehicle breaks down on an interstate or busy roadway, don't leave your vehicle. Instead call #77 or 911 for assistance. Motorists can also call #77 to report a disabled vehicle they see on the roadways.
- Teach children not to run into the street after balls, don't allow them to cross alone until you've practiced the basics with them hundreds of times.
- If you are driving, be on the lookout for pedestrians near the roadway.

For more information on the Walk Smart campaign visit the Office of Highway Safety website at www.ohs.delaware.gov and click on the Walk Smart campaign button.

###